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AUTHORITY

PART THREE OF SEVEN

STORIES IN COLLABORATION

QUASAR

TM

**THE
ENEMY
REVEALED!**



EK



WENDELL VAUGHN... THE FIRST EARTH MAN EVER APPOINTED PROTECTOR OF THE UNIVERSE. BONDED TO THE ENERGY-TRANSFORMING QUANTUM-BANDS THAT ARE BOTH WEAPONS AND SYMBOLS OF HIS STATION. HE FIGHTS AN ONGOING BATTLE TO DEFEND ALL LIFE IN THE UNIVERSE FROM COSMIC EVIL.
STAN LEE PRESENTS... QUASAR!

PROLOGUE: ARMS AND THE MAN

THERE IS SPACE PAST KNOWN SPACE, SO FAR BEYOND THE STARS THAT STARLIGHT HAS YET TO REACH IT. IT IS A PLACE WHERE ONLY CERTAIN ABSTRACT ENTITIES OF THE UNIVERSE DARE TO GO, A PLACE WHERE THEY CAN CONVEENE IN UTMOST PRIVACY.

APPROACHING THE LORD OF THE OUTER VOID IS AN ETHEREAL YOUNG UPSTART, NEW TO THE WAYS OF POWER BEYOND POWER. THIS IS HIS FIRST JOURNEY OUTSIDE KNOWN SPACE. BUT IF THERE IS ANY TREPIDATION IN HIS SOUL, HE KNOWS ENOUGH NOT TO BETRAY IT.

WHAT TRANSPIRES HERE OCCURS IN THE PAST, AS TIME IS RECKONED FROM EARTH.

O GREAT OBLIVION, PROGENITOR OF DEATH AND MASTER OF ALL THAT ISN'T, I IMPORE YOU TO GRANT ME AN AUDIENCE.

SPEAK.

I AM THE NEW ANOMALY. I HAVE SLAIN THE OLD AND ASSUMED ITS NICHE IN THE COSMOLOGICAL HIERARCHY.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOUR RELATIONSHIP WAS WITH MY PREDECESSOR BUT IT IS MY FONDEST WISH TO FORGE A STRONG ALLIANCE BETWEEN US FOR THE MUTUAL ADVANCEMENT OF OUR RESPECTIVE PRINCIPLES.

CONTINUE.

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THIS IS MY GOAL: TO COLLAPSE THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE INTO A SINGLE ANOMALOUS POINT, THEREBY RENDERING ALL THAT IS INTO YOUR DOMAIN, THE REALM OF TRACKLESS OBLIVION.

YOU ARE NOTHING IF NOT AMBITIOUS, ANOMALY. DO YOU NOT REALIZE THAT ANY SUCH ATTEMPT TO UPSET THE COSMIC BALANCE WILL TILT THE SUPREME POWERS OF THE UNIVERSE AGAINST YOU?

LET ME WORRY ABOUT THEM, MOST LEARNED AND POWERFUL MASTER. DO I HAVE YOUR BLESSING TO UNDERTAKE THIS TASK?

YES. WHAT IS IT YOU NEED TO PROCEED?

COSMIC AWARENESS-- OMNISCIENCE-- THE CAPACITY TO KNOW THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE IN ALL ITS DEPTH AND COMPLEXITY.

SEEK EON, ONE OF THE TIME BEINGS. HE IS THE LEAST POWERFUL OF ALL THE VARIOUS ENTITIES WHO POSSESS THAT ATTRIBUTE IN ITS TOTALITY.

YOU HAVE THE GREATEST CHANCE OF WRESTING ITS SECRET FROM ONE AS FEEBLE AS HIM.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COUNSEL, O GREAT OBLIVION. I SHALL KEEP YOU INFORMED OF MY PROGRESS.

I GO!

YES, DEATHURGE, IT WAS.

THAT FIGURE... WASN'T THAT?

AFTER ALL THIS TIME, I FINALLY UNDERSTAND WHY YOU BADE ME TO POSE AS HIS UNDERLING. YOU KNEW HE WOULD ONE DAY TRANSCEND HIS MORTAL SHELL AND ATTAIN A STATION IN WHICH HE MIGHT SERVE YOU, DIDN'T YOU?

ASPECTS OF THE FUTURE ARE BEST CONTEMPLATED IN THE VOID.

A CEMETERY IN QUEENS ON A DISMAL DAY IN FEBRUARY...

GILBERT VAUGHN, MAY YOUR SPIRIT BE AT PEACE...

YEAH, RIGHT.

I ASKED THE MINISTER TO GO **EASY** ON THE EMPTY PLATITUDES--DAD WOULD'VE WANTED IT THAT WAY-- BUT STILL...

... HOW COULD I EXPECT A MAN OF GOD **NOT** TO WORK HIS **BOSS'S** NAME IN EVERY OTHER SENTENCE?

LET'S GO.

HOW YOU **HOLDING UP**, SON?

OKAY, I GUESS. I JUST... I'M JUST FILLED WITH SUCH **ANGER**... SO MUCH **REGRET**.

DAD AND I HAD A... **FIGHT** THE LAST TIME I SAW HIM, RIGHT BEFORE HE **DIED**. NOW I'LL **NEVER** BE ABLE TO MAKE IT UP TO HIM.

DON'T WORRY, SON. I'M SURE **WHEREVER** HE IS NOW, HE'S **FORGIVEN** YOU.

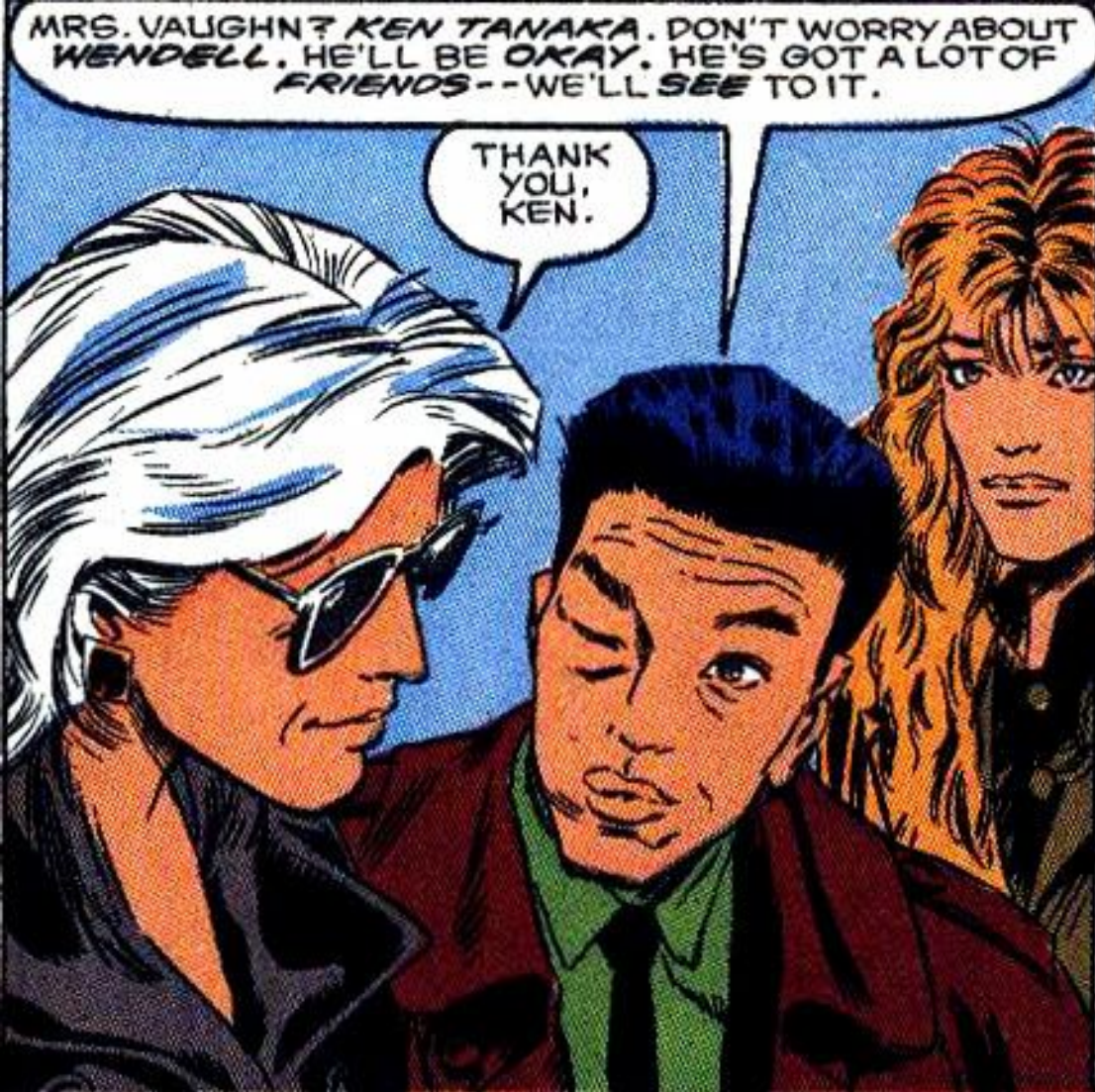
NO, MOM! HE'S **NOWHERE!**

WHEN YOU DIE, THE **BUNDLE OF ENERGY** THAT WAS **YOU** DISSIPATES-- RETURNS TO THE **WORLD**. THERE'S **NOTHING LEFT OF YOU** ANYMORE.

THIS LIFE IS **ALL THERE IS**-- AND NO ONE CAN PROVE TO ME OTHERWISE! **DAD** BELIEVED THAT, TOO. AND NOW THAT HE **DOESN'T EXIST**, THERE'S **NO ONE** TO FORGIVE ME!

THEN YOU'LL HAVE TO FORGIVE **YOURSELF**, SON. YOU **KNOW** THAT'S WHAT **HE** WOULD HAVE WANTED.

I'M **NOT** GOING TO FORGIVE MYSELF. I **WANT** TO FEEL BAD. I **DESERVE** TO FEEL BAD. **OKAY?**



MRS. VAUGHN? KEN TANAKA. DON'T WORRY ABOUT WENDELL. HE'LL BE OKAY. HE'S GOT A LOT OF FRIENDS--WE'LL SEE TO IT.

THANK YOU, KEN.

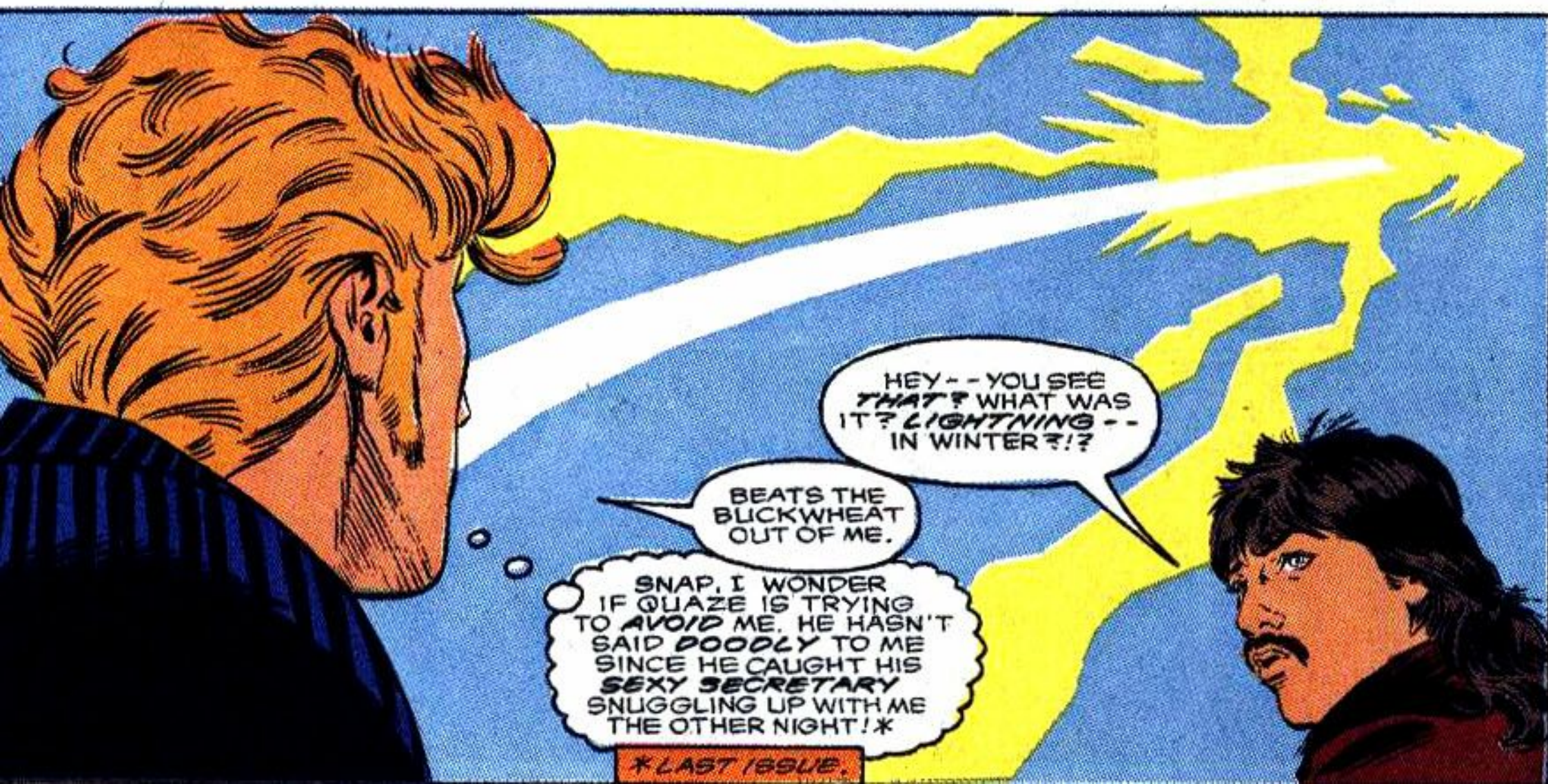
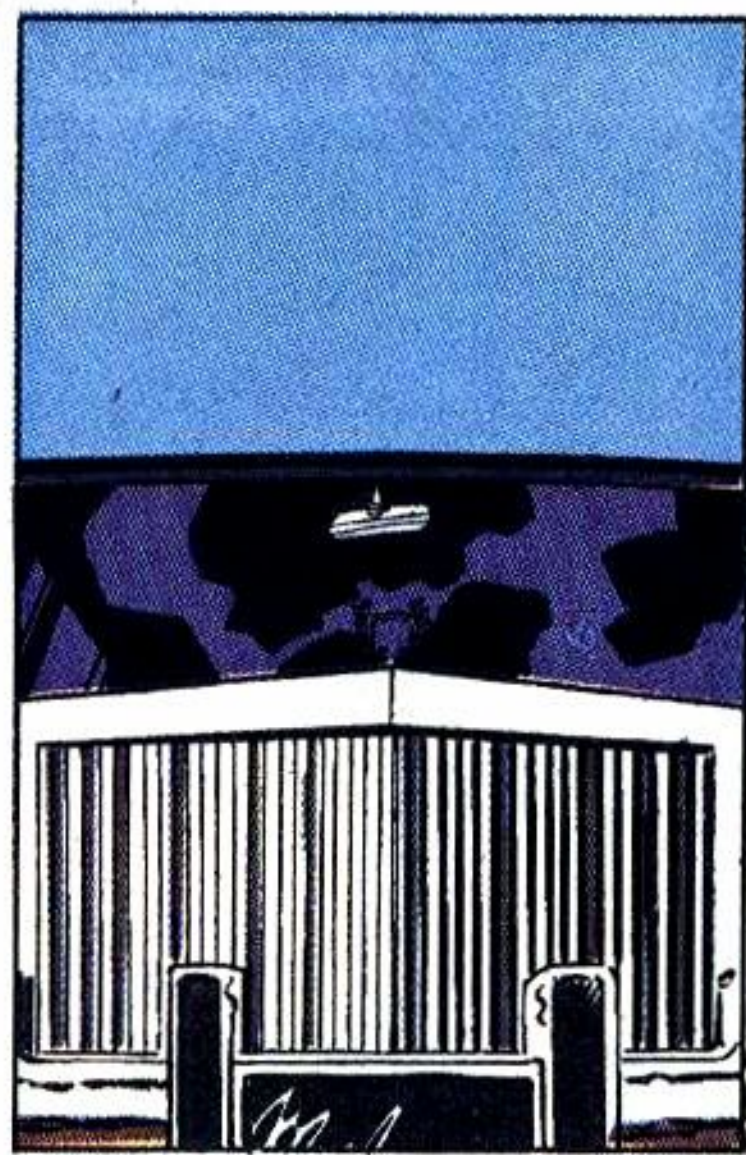


THIS IS LIKE WEIRD. IN THE TWO MILLENNIA OR SO I'VE BEEN AROUND, THIS IS THE FIRST HUMAN FUNERAL I'VE EVER ATTENDED. SO BIZARRE HOW HUMANS HAVE TO LIVE EVERY DAY OF THEIR LIVES KNOWING THEY'RE GONNA DIE. GLAD I'M AN ETERNAL. I DON'T KNOW IF I COULD HANDLE THE CONSTANT MORBIDITY.

WONDER IF IT WAS A MISTAKE TO BEFRIEND MORTALS LIKE I DID. FRIENDSHIP WITH THEM IS SO... TRANSIENT.



I CAN'T TAKE ALL THESE PEOPLE ANYMORE I'VE GOT TO GET AWAY, GET SOME TIME TO MYSELF TO THINK!



HEY-- YOU SEE THAT? WHAT WAS IT? LIGHTNING-- IN WINTER?!

BEATS THE BUCKWHEAT OUT OF ME.

SNAP, I WONDER IF QUAZE IS TRYING TO AVOID ME. HE HASN'T SAID DOODLY TO ME SINCE HE CAUGHT HIS SEXY SECRETARY SNUGLING UP WITH ME THE OTHER NIGHT!*

*LAST ISSUE.

LIFE SEEMS
SO EMPTY, SO
PURPOSELESS
NO...

DAD'S GONE... I TOLD EON TO KISS OFF...
I QUIT BEING PROTECTOR OF THE UNIVERSE...
I FEEL DISCONNECTED FROM EVERYONE
AND EVERYTHING...

MY HEAD FEELS LIKE
IT'S ABOUT TO BURST
FROM HOLDING BACK
ALL THE TEARS.

NOTHING SEEMS
THE SAME ANYMORE.
IT'S AS IF A CURTAIN'S
DROPPED AND I CAN NOW
SEE THE WORLD THE WAY
IT REALLY IS--

-- A COLD, DARK PLACE,
INHOSPITABLE TO THINKING,
FEELING LIFE FORMS.

WHY DO HUMAN BEINGS
HAVE TO SUFFER SO MUCH?
WHY DO WE HAVE TO BE SO
INTELLIGENT THAT NAIVE
SUPERSTITIONS CAN
NO LONGER GIVE US
COMFORT? WHY DO WE
HAVE TO FEEL THINGS
SO STRONGLY?

WHAT IS THE
EVOLUTIONARY
ADVANTAGE OF
EMOTIONS
ANYWAY?

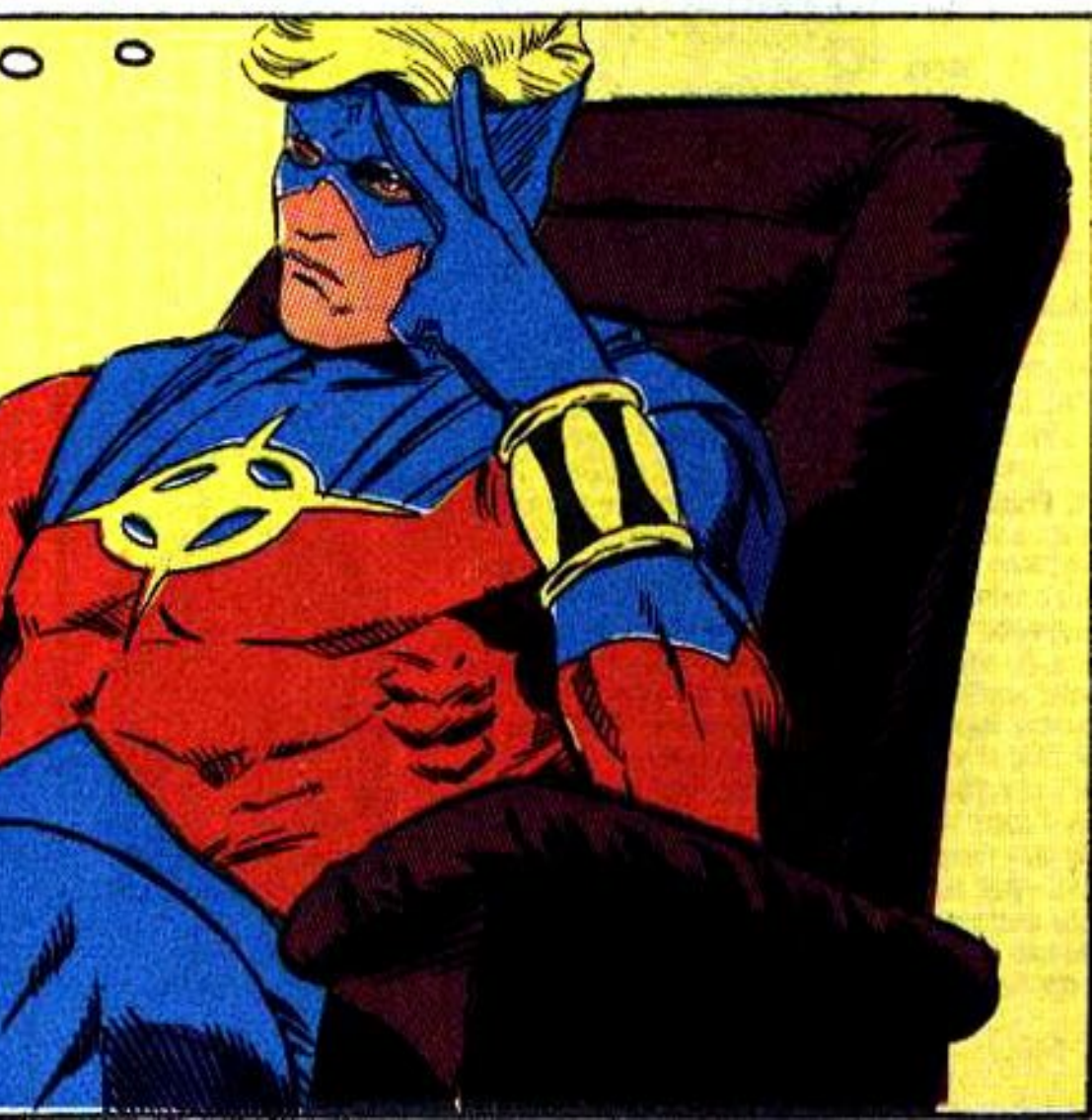
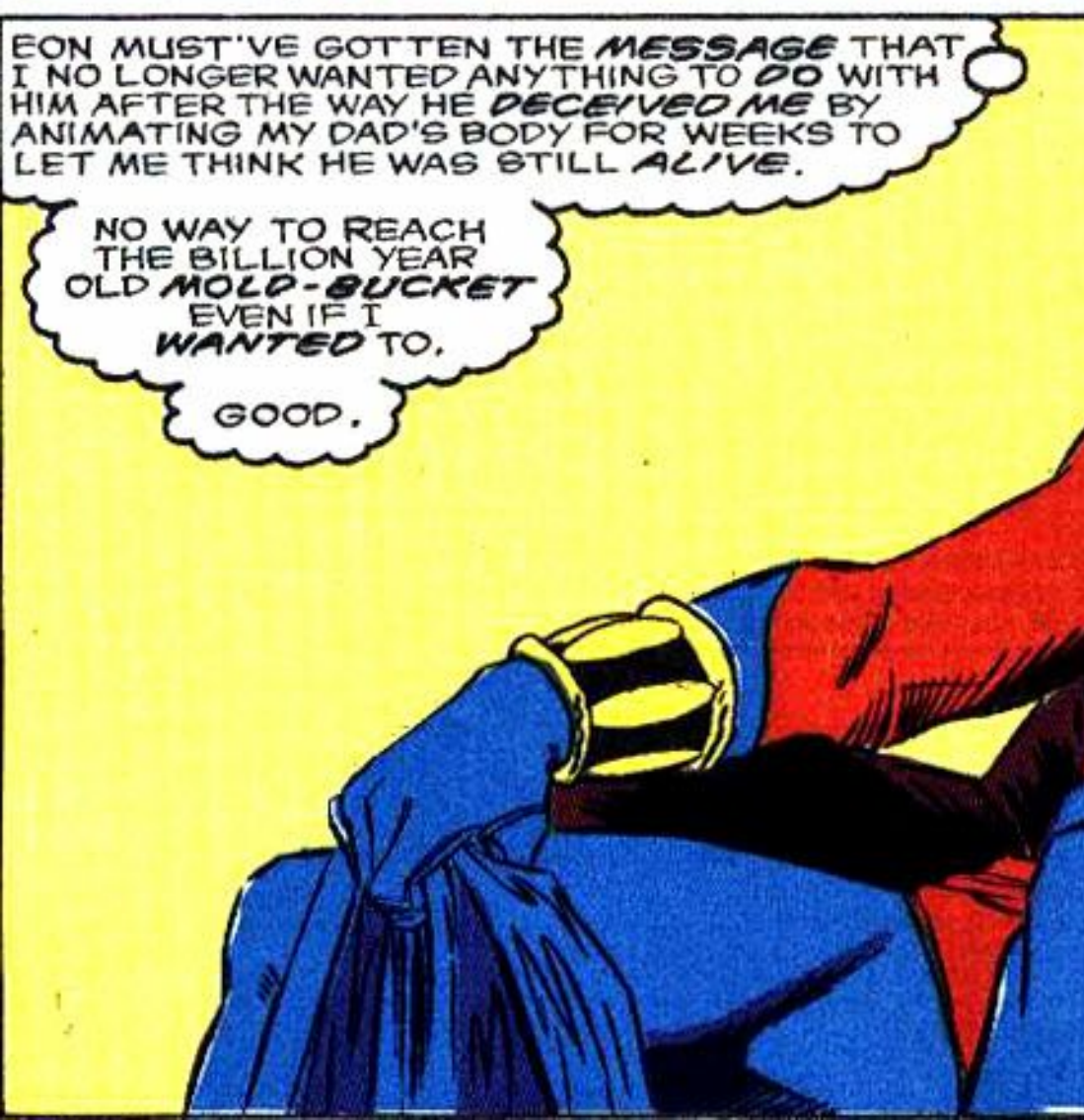
DAD WOULD HAVE BEEN ABLE TO
TELL ME. HE ALWAYS KNEW ALL THE
IMPORTANT ANSWERS.

AND IF HE DIDN'T KNOW,
HE'D AT LEAST BE ABLE TO
TELL ME ALL THE LEADING
THEORIES AND WHY NO
ONE'S BEEN ABLE TO
PROVE WHICH ONE HAS
THE MOST MERIT.

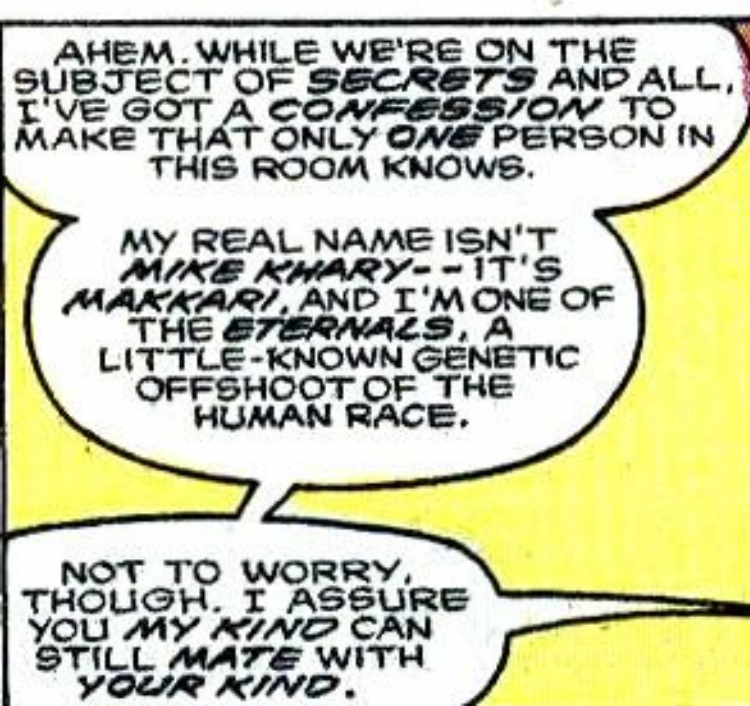
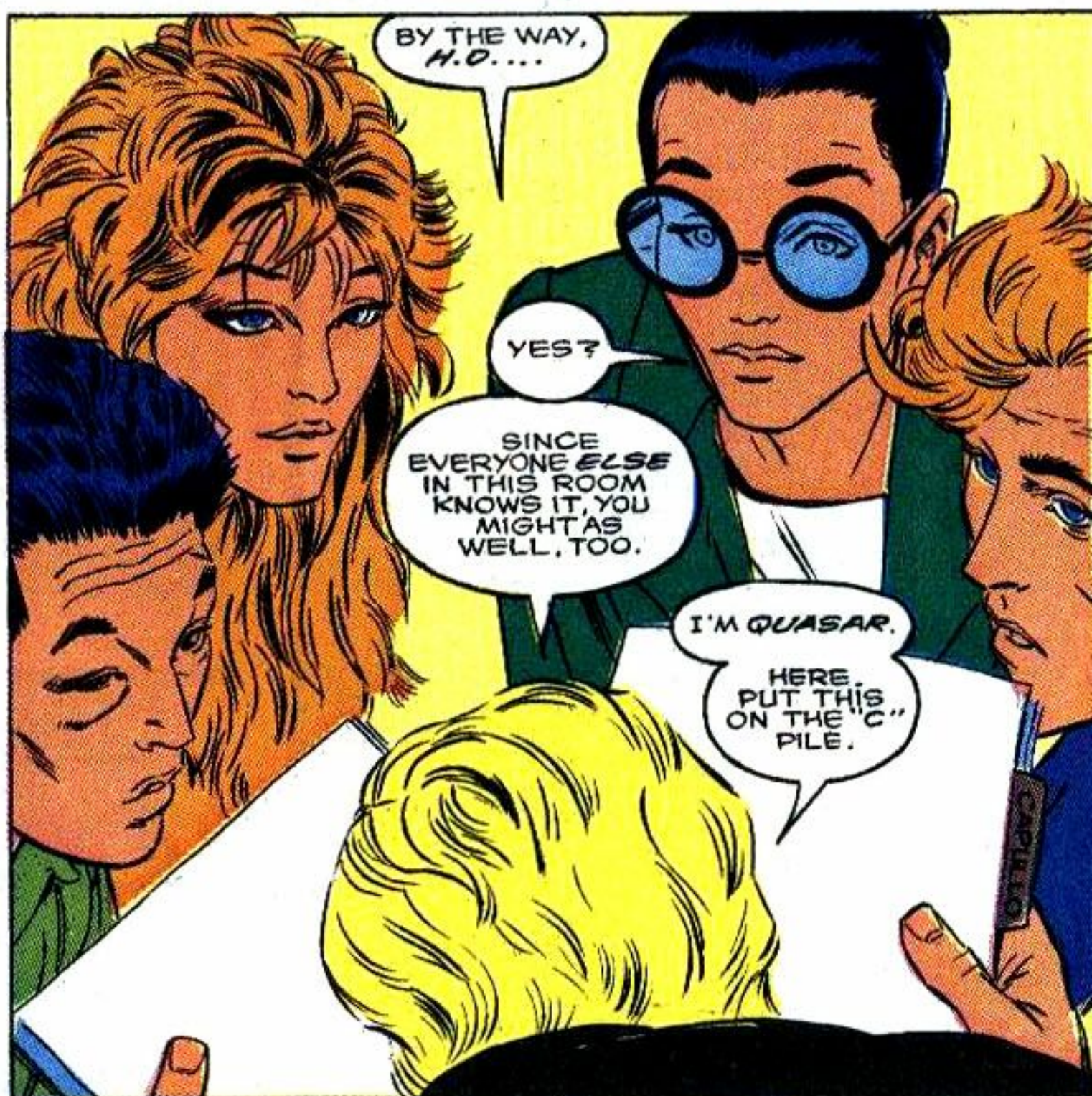
DAD... I'D GIVE
ANYTHING TO TALK
TO YOU JUST ONE
MORE TIME TO TELL
YOU HOW MUCH YOU
MEANT TO ME...

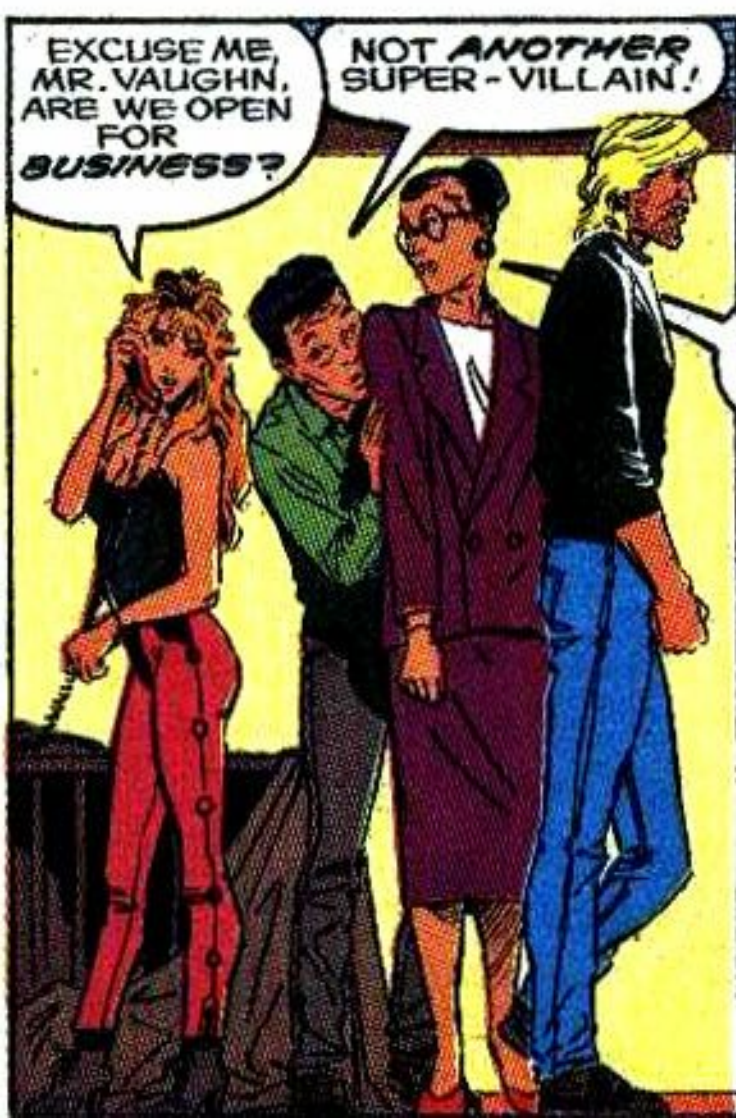
...HOW
MUCH I
LOVED
YOU.

SPRAAK



THE NEXT DAY...







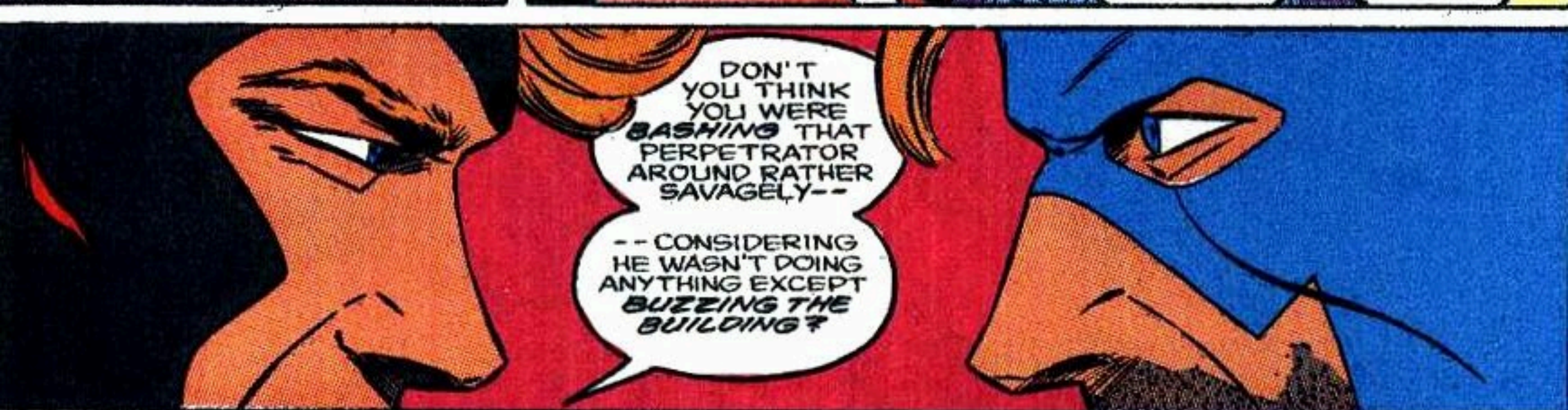
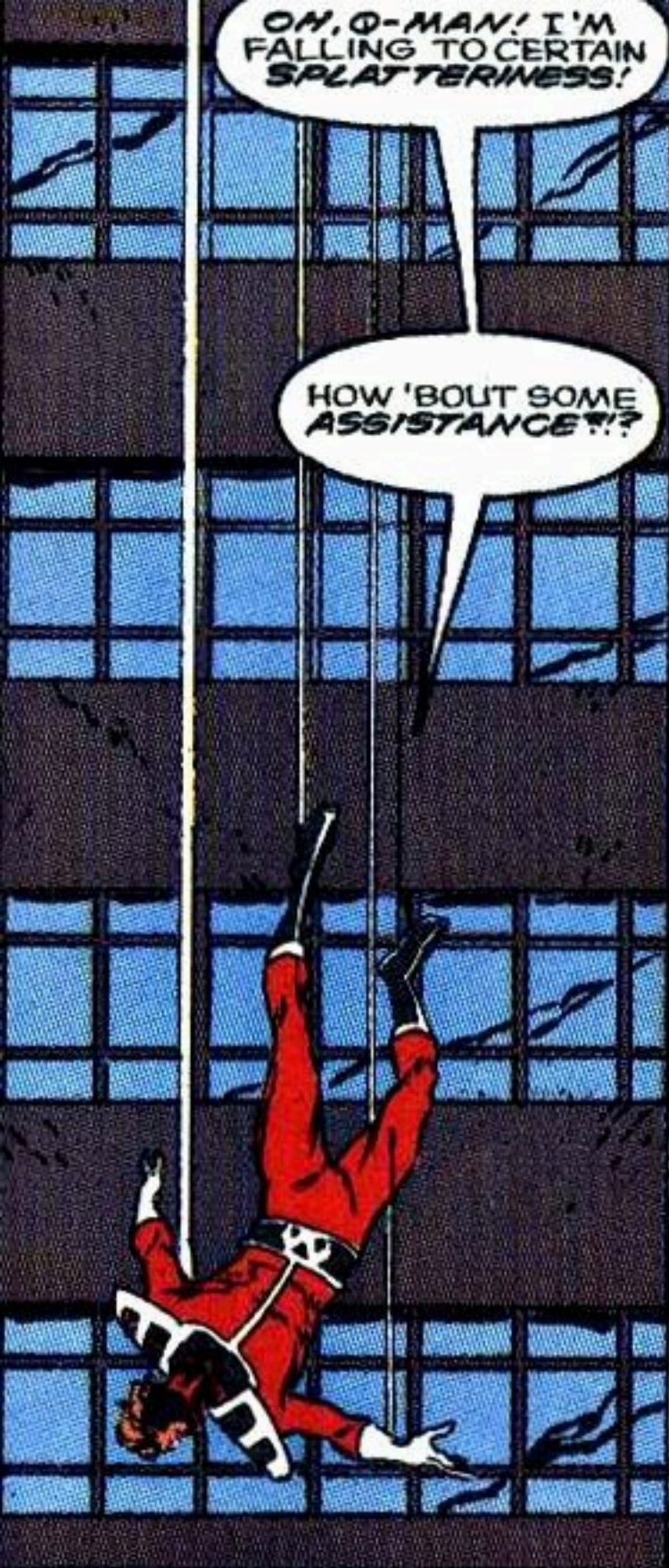
WHO IN THE --?
THAT'S NOT
ONE OF THE
FANTASTIC
FOUR!



THERMAL
BLAST, EH? TOO
BAD IT COULDN'T
GET THROUGH
MY PERSONAL
FORCE SCREEN.

MISTER, YOU
DON'T KNOW HOW
GLAD I AM THAT
YOU'RE LOOKING
FOR TROUBLE.







LATER THAT DAY...

SO THERMO'S AT THE HOSPITAL IN STABLE CONDITION...

HE CONFESSED THAT HE WAS HOPING TO RAID **FANTASTIC FOUR HEADQUARTERS** THROUGH THIS BREACH IN THE BUILDING... NOT THAT HIS STATEMENT TO ME WOULD HOLD UP IN A COURT OF LAW.



YOU GUYS DID A TERRIFIC JOB STRAIGHTENING UP WITHOUT ME, LOOKS LIKE.

JUST BEFORE YOU LEFT, WE GOT A PHONE CALL FROM A MR. STROMBERG.

APPARENTLY, HE'S THIS SUPER RICH GUY ON LONG ISLAND WHO WANTS A STATE OF THE ART SECURITY SYSTEM FOR HIS NEW ESTATE.

TAKE HIS NUMBER?



AND...

ANYONE UP FOR DINNER AT A BILLIONAIRE'S MANSION TONIGHT? HE'S INVITED ME AND MY WHOLE STAFF.



ME TOO?



ARE YOU SURE YOU'RE UP FOR THIS TYPE OF THING, MR. VAUGHN?

I'M UP FOR ANYTHING THAT TAKES MY MIND OFF REALITY.

YES. TELL MR. STROMBERG THERE WILL BE FIVE OF US. YES, A CAR WOULD BE NICE.

A BROTHER OF MINE OWNS A TUXEDO RENTAL SHOP...

THAT EVENING...

HOLY CROESUS! LOOK AT THIS PLACE-- IT'S LIKE A--A CASTLE! I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW THERE WAS ANYPLACE IN THE UNITED STATES THAT LOOKED LIKE THIS!

PUT A LID ON IT, KENYO-- YOU DON'T WANT THE DRIVER TO THINK WE'RE HAYSEEDS!



GREETINGS AND SALUTATIONS. I AM LEO, MR. STROMBERG'S HEAD MANSERVANT AND THIS IS RHINEAS, MY SECOND IN COMMAND!

I TRUST THE RIDE HERE WAS NOT TOO ARDUOUS?

IT WAS FINE. PLENTY OF ROOM.

COME, LET US BE OUT OF THE COLD.



AIEEH!

MADAM--? ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

I--I SUDDENLY ACQUIRED A HEADACHE.

H.D.--?

I'LL FETCH YOU AN ASPIRIN.



THERE'S A PSYCHIC PRESENCE HERE THAT STAGGERS MY OWN ABILITIES.

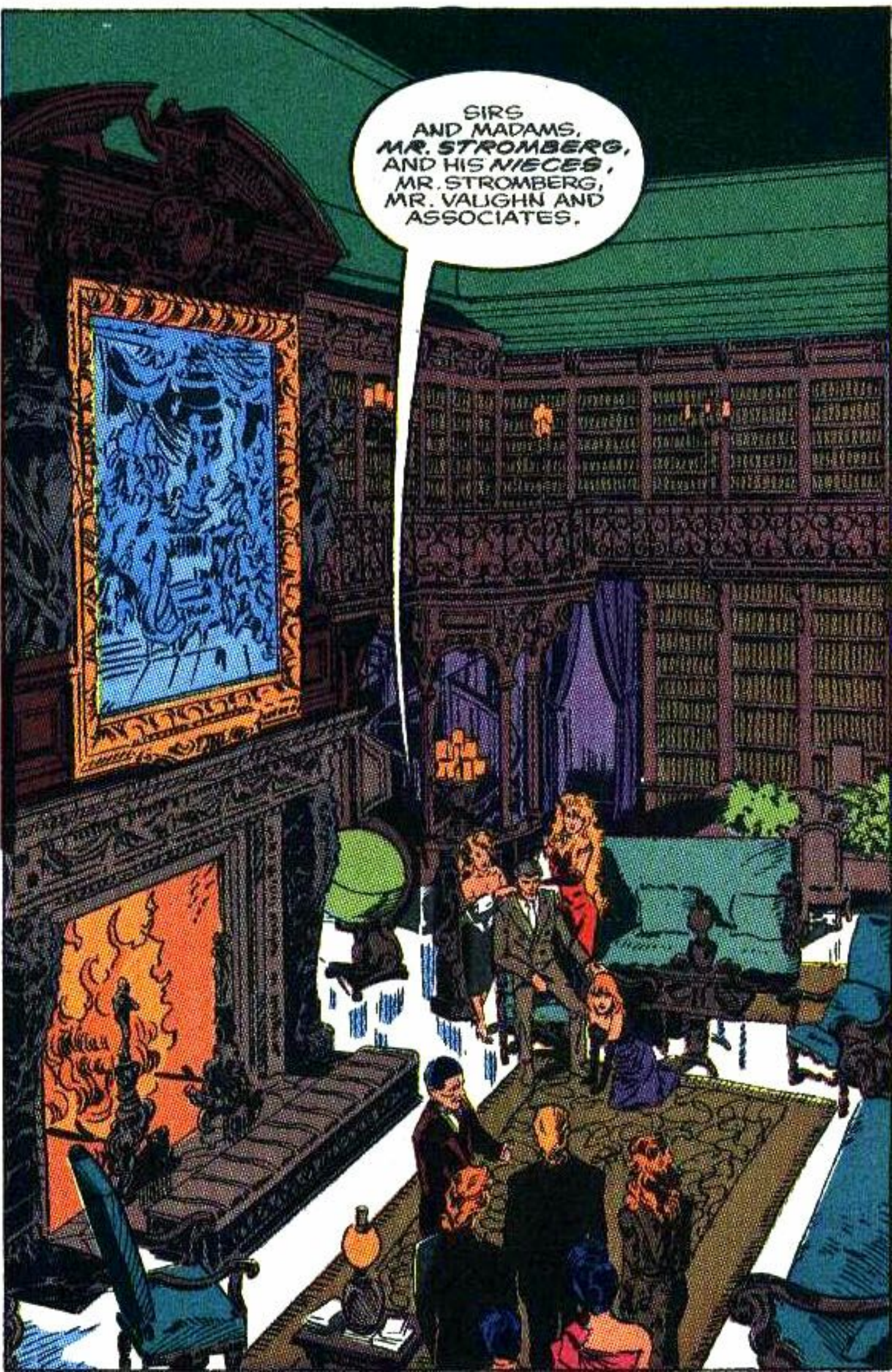
CAN THIS BE THE LAIR OF THE ONE?!

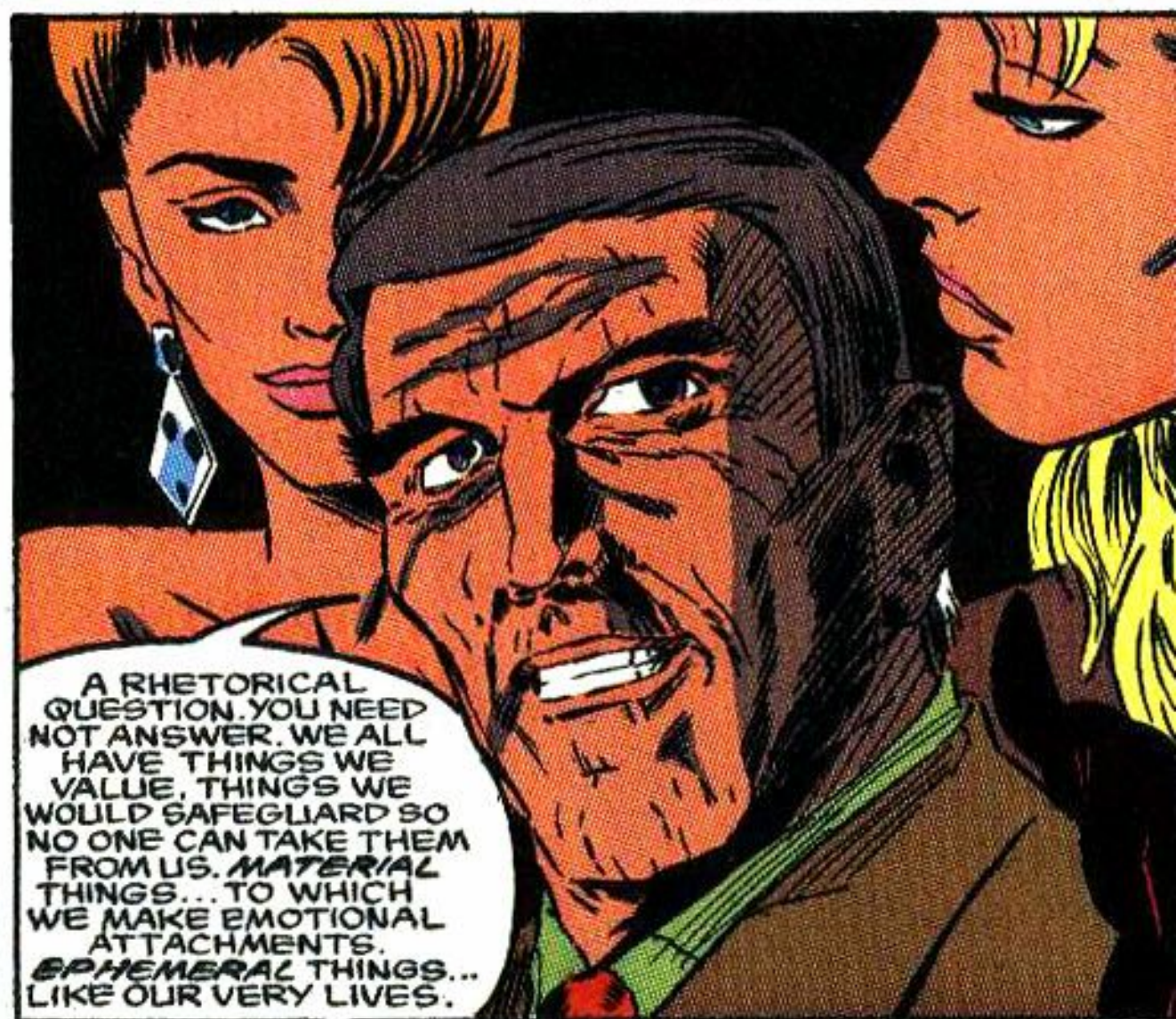
I'VE GOT TO TELL QUASAR-- THIS MAY BE A TRAP!



MR. STROMBERG OWNS NOT RENTS, SIR.

WOW! WHAT'S THE RENT ON A PLACE LIKE THIS?





AND...



SOME
WINE,
SIR?

YOU
MENTIONED
GENETICS,
MR. STROMBERG. BY
THAT DID YOU MEAN
YOU **INHERITED**
YOUR WEALTH, OR
DID YOU MEAN THE
SCIENCE OF
GENETICS?

LAY IT ON
ME,
GARÇON.

HA
HA.



SOMEONE-- SOME **OUTSIDE**
PARTY-- IS DOING THIS TO
ME! I HAVE TO **RESIST**! I
HAVE TO **MASTER** MY FEAR!
I HAVE TO **FIGHT** WHOEVER'S
INSIDE MY HEAD!

QUASAR--EON--
THE UNIVERSE
MAY DEPEND
ON ME!



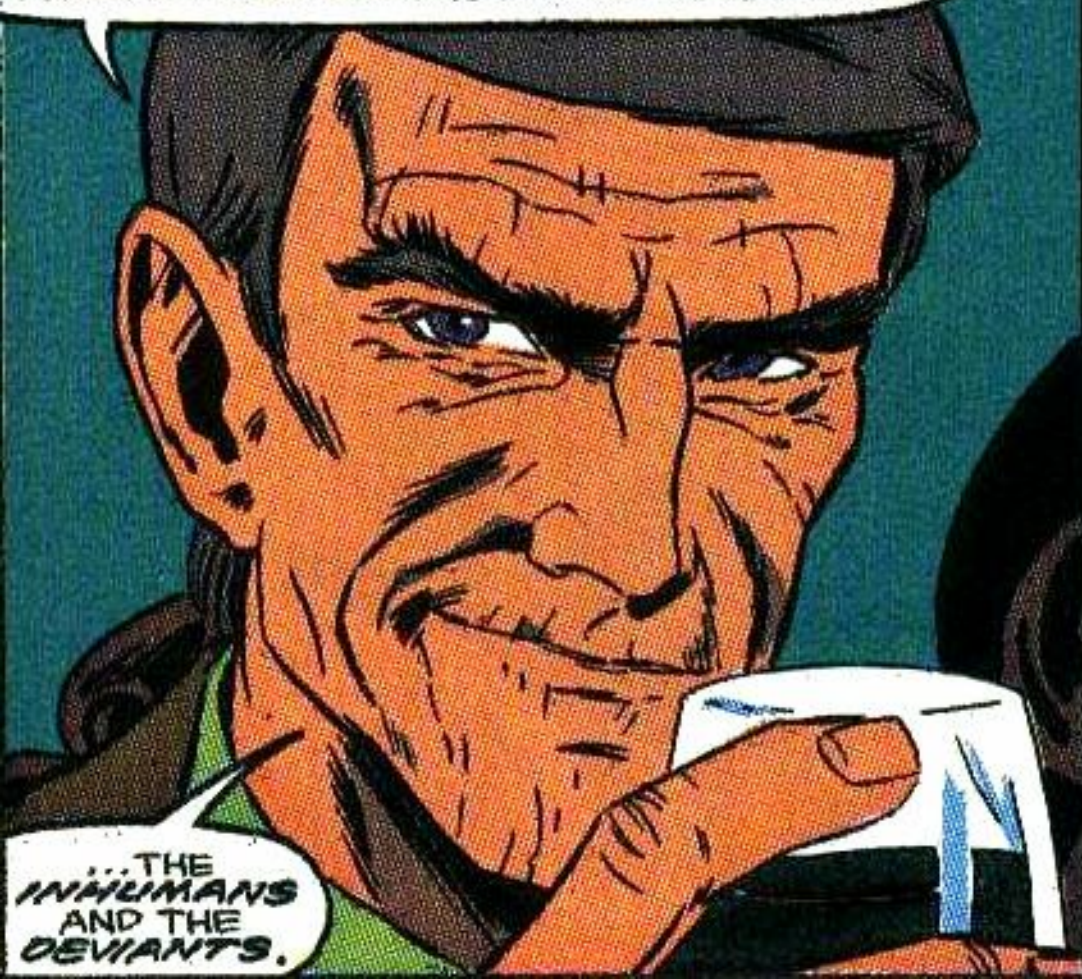
A LITTLE OF **BOTH**, MY FRIEND. I'D BE GLAD TO
TELL YOU MY WHOLE LIFE STORY, BUT IT WOULD BE
EGREGIOUS MANNERS FOR A HOST TO BORE
HIS GUESTS TO DEATH.

I'M SURE IT
WOULDN'T BORE
ANY OF US, SIR.
PLEASE.

VERY
WELL
THEN.

I'M SOMETHING OF
AN **ANOMALY**,
ALWAYS HAVE BEEN.

YOU SEE, MY **PARENTS** WERE MEMBERS OF
TWO DISTINCT OFFSHOOTS OF HUMANITY...



...THE
INHUMANS
AND THE
DEVIANTS.

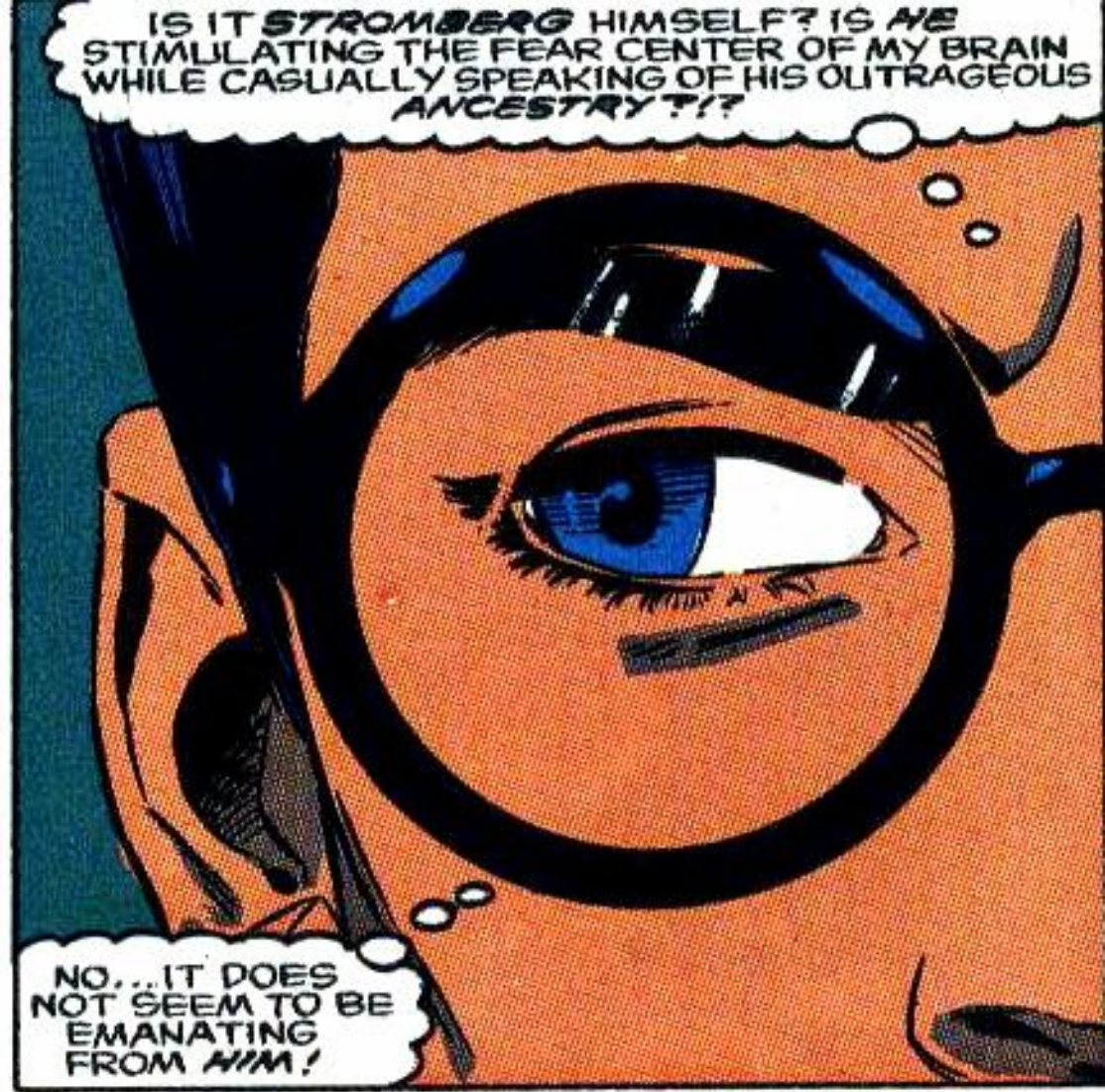


AH,
YOU'VE
HEARD
OF THEM?
GOOD.



MY FATHER WAS AN **INHUMAN**, A MEMBER OF THE GENETICALLY ADVANCED SUB-SPECIES WHO UNTIL MID-CENTURY LIVED ON A SMALL ISLAND IN THE ATLANTIC

MY MOTHER WAS A **DEVIAINT**, A MEMBER OF THE GENETICALLY VARIABLE SUB-SPECIES WHO LIVED IN ONE OF THE AIR-FILLED UNDERSEA CITIES OF THE PACIFIC OCEAN'S **LEMURIAN EMPIRE**.



IS IT **STROMBERG** HIMSELF? IS HE STIMULATING THE FEAR CENTER OF MY BRAIN WHILE CASUALLY SPEAKING OF HIS OUTRAGEOUS **ANCESTRY**?!

NO...IT DOES NOT SEEM TO BE EMANATING FROM HIM!



MY PARENTS MET A LITTLE MORE THAN A CENTURY AGO WHEN MY FATHER HAD A FALLING-OUT WITH THE RULING COUNCIL OF **ATTILAN** AND WENT INTO **SELF-EXILE**.

MY FATHER, A MASTER GENETICIST, FLED TO THE PACIFIC AND ESTABLISHED A STRONGHOLD THERE IN AN ABANDONED **DEVIAINT OUTPOST**.

SUPPOSEDLY ABANDONED, AT ANY RATE.

WHEN THE **DEVIAINTS** FOUND HIM THERE AND SAW THE WORK HE WAS DOING, HE WAS TAKEN TO THE **CAPITAL** OF THE EMPIRE.

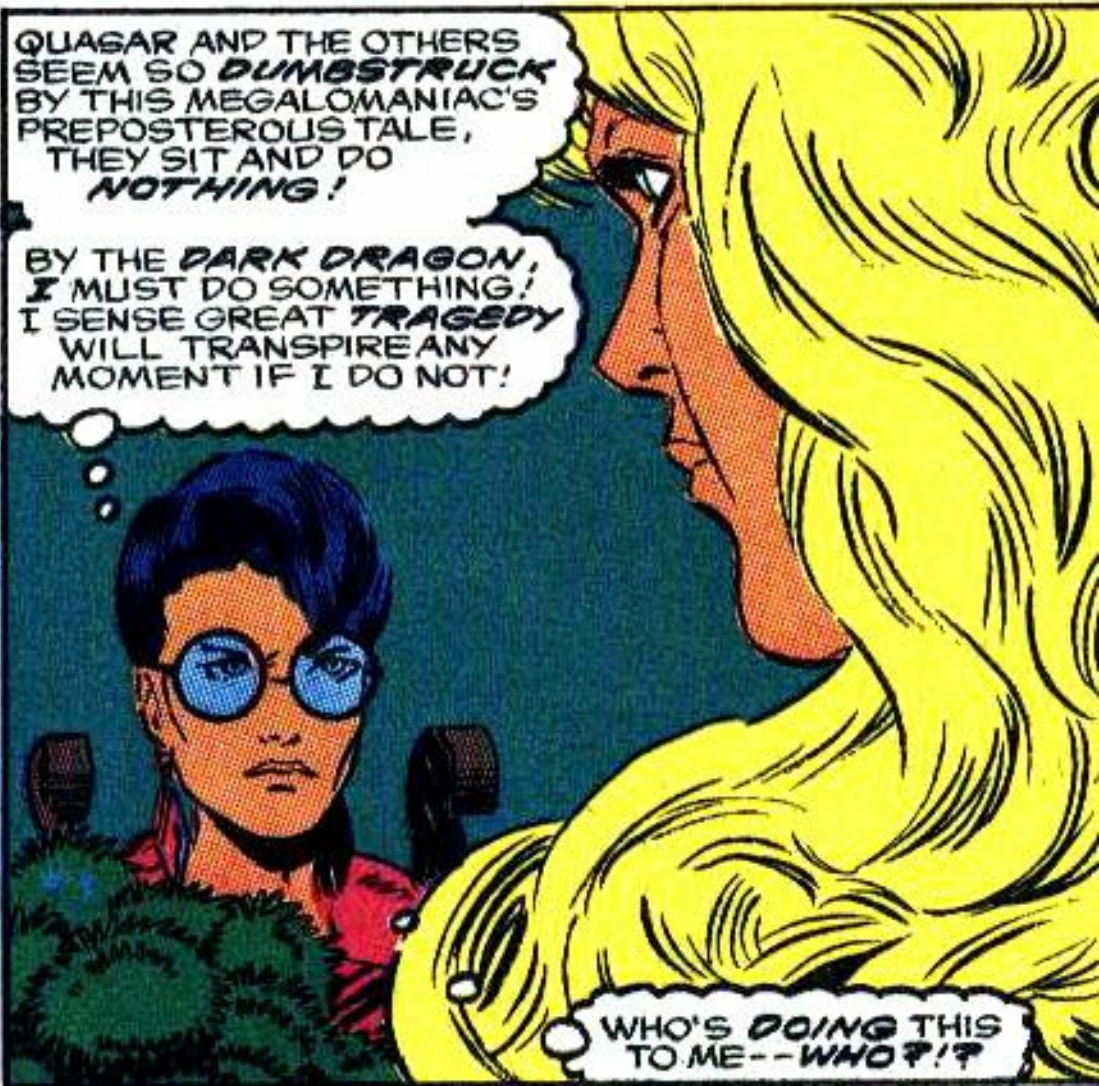
THERE HE WAS PUT TO WORK TRYING TO SOLVE THE **GENETIC PUZZLE** THAT HAS PLAGUED THE **DEVIAINT** RACE SINCE ITS INCEPTION.

PERHAPS ONE OF HIS SO-CALLED **NIECES**...IS ONE OF THEM A **PROJECTING TELEPATH**? THERE'S SOMETHING **NOT RIGHT** ABOUT THEM!



... WHY GENETIC MATERIAL **MUTATES** SO DRASTICALLY FROM **ONE GENERATION** TO THE **NEXT**. IT WAS THERE HE MET MY MOTHER.

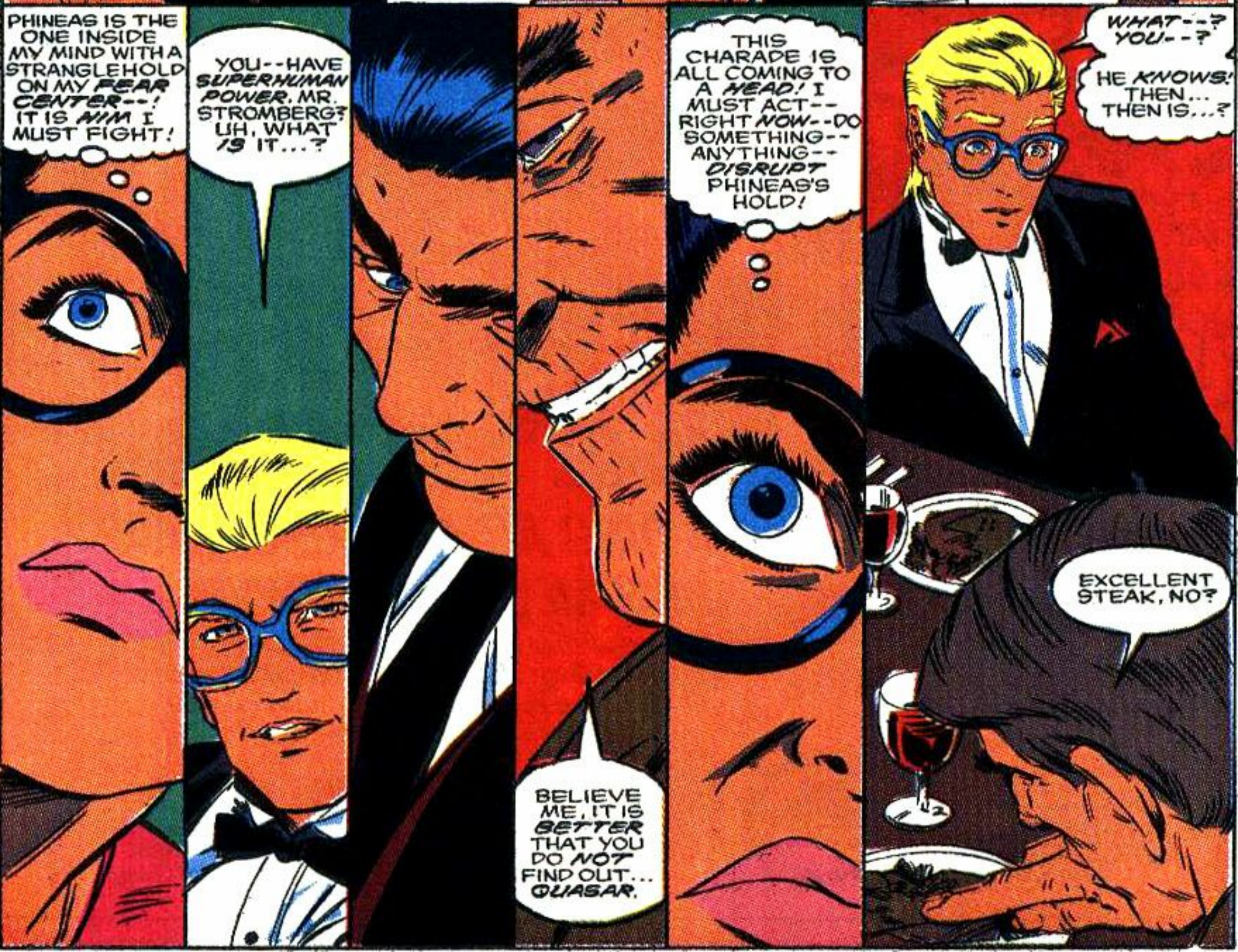
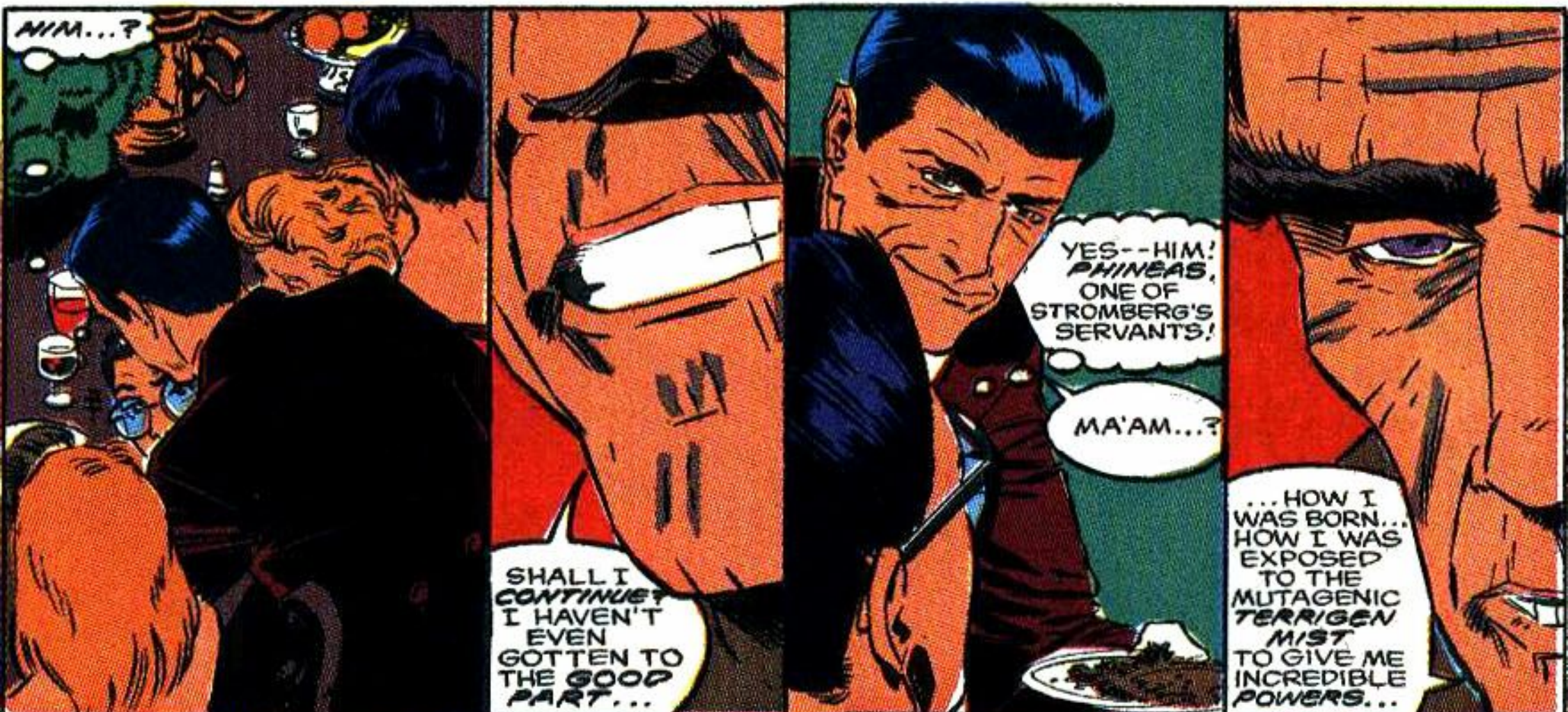
BY **DEVIAINT** STANDARDS, SHE WAS **HIDEOUS**. BY MY FATHER'S **INHUMAN** STANDARDS, SHE WAS A CREATURE OF **EXQUISITE BEAUTY**.

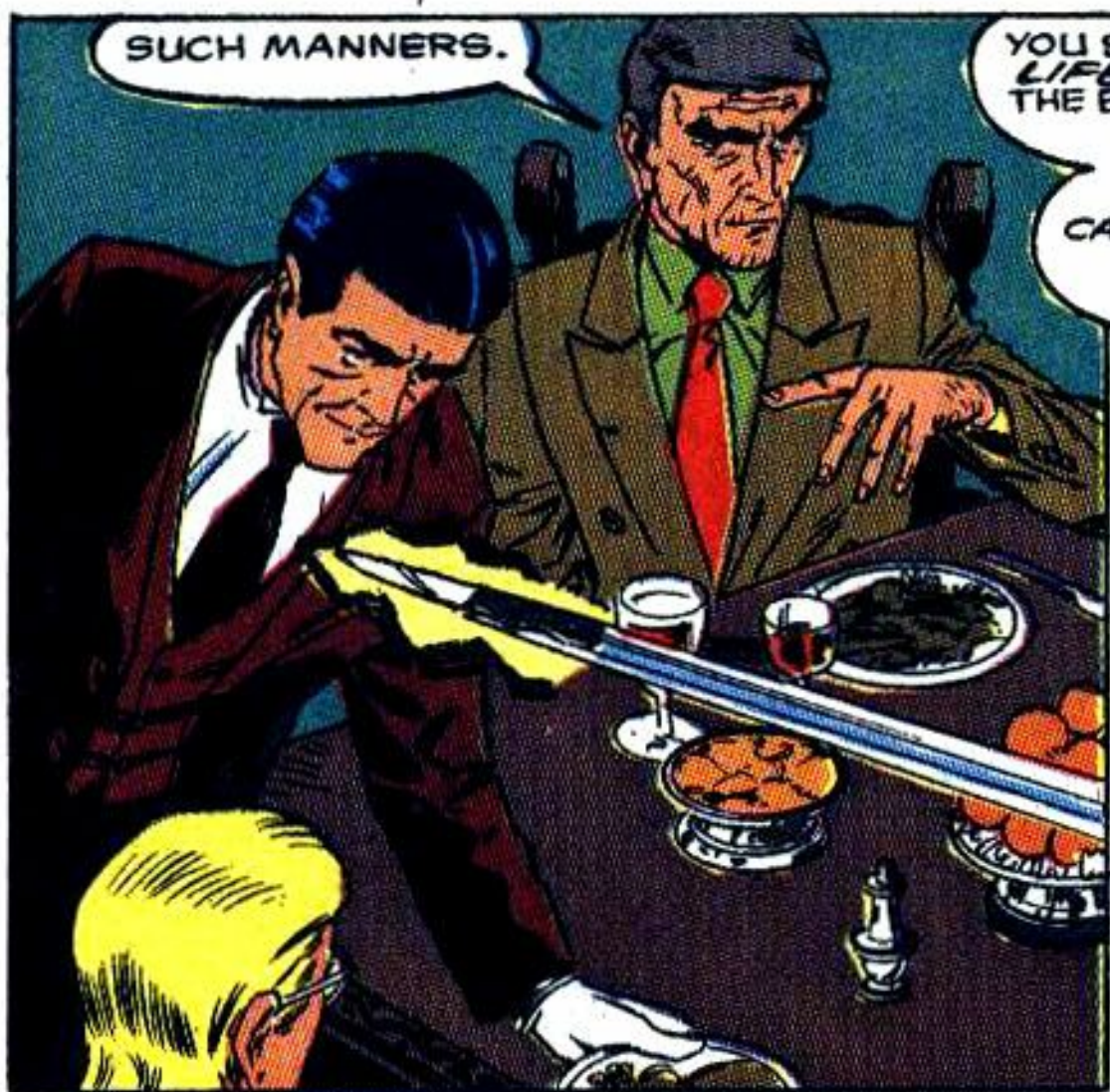
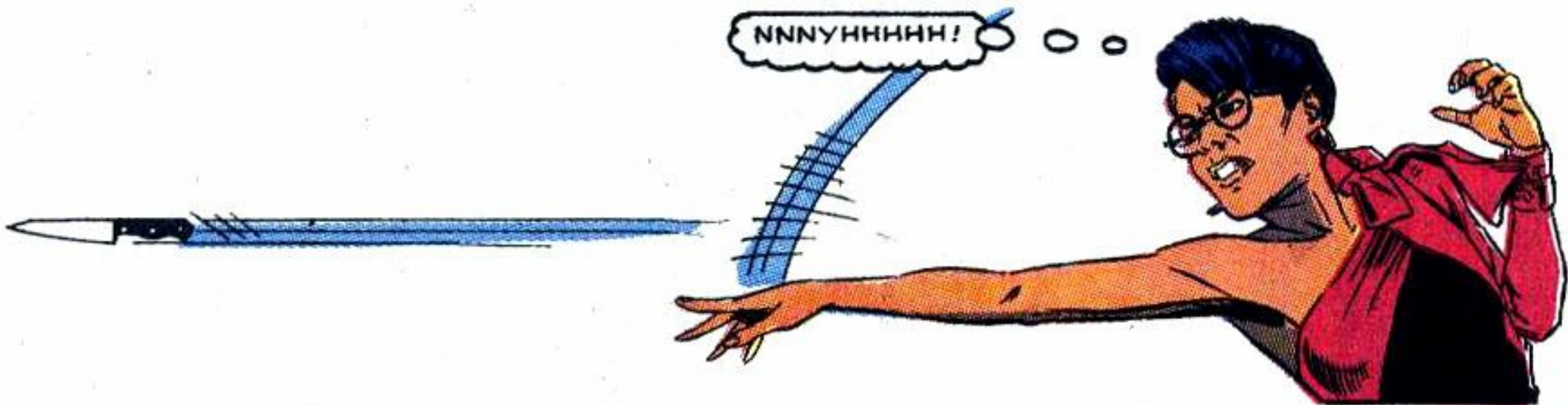


QUAGAR AND THE OTHERS SEEM SO **DUMBSTRUCK** BY THIS **MEGALOMANIAC'S** PREPOSTEROUS TALE, THEY SIT AND DO **NOTHING**!

BY THE **DARK DRAGON**, I MUST DO SOMETHING! I SENSE GREAT **TRAGEDY** WILL TRANSPIRE ANY MOMENT IF I DO NOT!

WHO'S **DOING** THIS TO ME--WHO?!





YOU SEE, THE POWER I HAVE HOLDS YOUR LIFE AND THAT OF ALL YOUR FRIENDS IN THE BALANCE EVEN AS IT HOLDS THAT KNIFE MOTIONLESS IN THE AIR.

YOU WOULD NOT CARE FOR A FURTHER DEMONSTRATION, I ASSURE YOU.



THIS IS ALL SOME SORT OF TRAP, AND LIKE A JERK I WALTZED INTO IT WITH A BUNCH OF HOSTAGES.

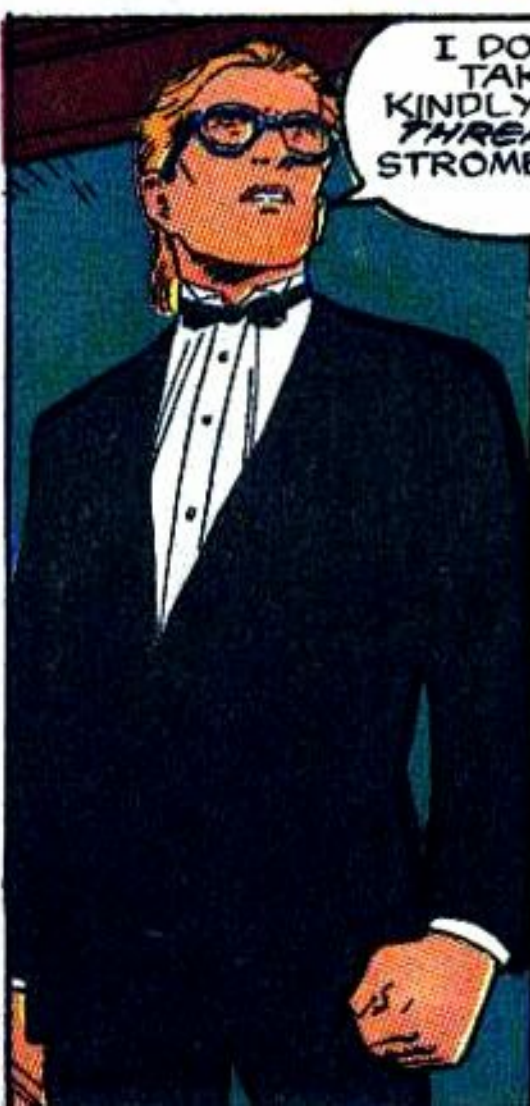
WHAT'S GOING ON? WHY DID H.D. THROW THAT KNIFE? HOW'S IT HANGING THERE LIKE THAT?

WEIRD JUNK GOING DOWN-- THIS STROMBERG ANOTHER OF VAUGHN'S SUPER-FOES OR WHAT?



CONNIVING HALFBREED DEEV--!

WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR, QUASAR?



I DON'T TAKE KINDLY TO THREATS, STROMBERG.



THREATS? HAVE I MADE ANY THREATS?

NO, UNCLE MALCOLM.



WHAT IS IT YOU WANT, STROMBERG?

CAN'T YOU GUESS?



YOUR QUANTUM-BANDS, DEAR BOY--WHAT ELSE?

SURRENDER THEM AND YOUR FRIENDS LEAVE THIS TABLE ALIVE.







MY PSYCHIC POWERS
NEUTRALIZED! ANY
PHYSICAL ACT WOULD
ONLY BE THWARTED
AND MY HEART WOULD BE
STOPPED! QUASAR--MY
LOVE--I'M AFRAID IT'S
ALL UP TO YOU!

SON--I'M
SORRY I'VE
FAILED
YOU!



SURRENDER YOUR
QUANTUM-BANDS.

I CAN'T! THEY
WON'T COME OFF
MY WRISTS. NOT
TILL I'M DEAD!

KILLING IS SUCH
A WASTE. YOU'RE SURE
THAT'S WHAT I HAVE
TO DO TO GET THEM?



WHAT CAN I DO?
BLAST IT, THINK
THINK THINK!

I CAN'T LET HIM
HURT ANY OF THE
OTHERS, BUT I CAN'T
JUST TELL HIM TO
GO AHEAD AND TRY
TO KILL ME!

YOU HAVE TO THE COUNT
OF THREE TO GIVE UP
YOUR QUANTUM-BANDS,
OR THE MATTER IS
OUT OF MY HANDS.



THAT IS
TO SAY, OUT
OF YOUR
HANDS...
ONE!



PROMISE
YOU'LL LET
GO OF MY
FRIENDS?

EVENTUALLY.
TWO!

I SWEAR
TO
YOU. IF--

THREE!
TIME'S
UP.

SAY
GOOD-BYE
TO YOUR
HANDS.

FIVE GRISLY MINUTES
LATER...

PATHETIC
SIMPLETON!
THOUGHT YOU HAD
DEALT WITH THE
COSMIC ASSASSIN
WHEN YOU DISPATCHED
MY LITTLE PAWN--
THE PRESENCE--
DIDN'T YOU?

HOW
EASILY
DUPED
YOU ARE.

AND NOW YOUR
QUANTUM-BANDS ARE
MINE! AND WITH THEM, I,
MALCOLM STROMBERG,
ALIAS THE ANOMALY, ALIAS
MAELSTROM, SHALL KILL
EON AND BECOME THE
DEADLIEST BEING IN
THE UNIVERSE!

NEXT: A LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO DEATH!